

Message Text

SECRET

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12
ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2402
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T MUSCAT 1023

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, MU, US
SUBJECT: USE OF MASIRAH

REF: (A) MUSCAT 0914; (B) STATE 183422; (C) MUSCAT 0865
(D) LONDON 10969

1. IN MEETING AUGUST 17 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ZAWAWI, AMBASSADOR NOTIFIED HIM OF NEXT P-3 FLIGHT SCHEDULED AUG 23-25. ZAWAWI, JUST BACK IN MUSCAT AFTER 5-WEEK ABSENCE, OBVIOUSLY WAS PRIMED TO RAISE QUESTION OF MASIRAH ACCESS FOR FUTURE, I.E. POST-MARCH 1977. HE SAID HE SUPPOSED THAT CURRENT SERIES OF FLIGHTS WOULD BE PROVIDING BENEFITS IN TERMS OF ESTABLISHING PATTERN OF TIMINGS, LOGISTICAL FACTORS, AND OTHER EVIDENCE TO SHOW JUST HOW FUTURE FLIGHTS MIGHT SERVE MUTUAL INTERESTS. HE NOTED IMPORTANCE TO OMANGOV OF KNOWING WHAT THESE PERMANENT ARRANGEMENTS MIGHT BE. SULTAN'S AIRFORCE, FOR EXAMPLE, IS PLANNING FOR FUTURE MASIRAH AIRFIELD OPERATIONS AND SHOULD KNOW WHAT SPECIAL FUEL AND STORES WE MIGHT WISH TO HAVE. HOW WOULD LANDING AND HANDLING FEES BE ARRANGED? WHAT SPIN-OFF INFORMATION REGARDING GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF INTEREST TO OMAN MIGHT THEY EXPECT TO RECEIVE AS A RESULT? THE TIME WOULD BE DRAWING NEAR, WHEN, FOR THE SAKE OF PROPER PLANNING, HE

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HOPES WE WILL BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS SOME OF THESE THINGS.

2. ZAWAWI RECALLED THAT A MONTH BEFORE (REF D) HE HAD SUGGESTED TO LONDON EMOFF THE POSSIBILITY OF DISCUSSIONS THERE. THAT WAS BECAUSE SULTAN QABOOS WAS IN LONDON AT THE TIME. ZAWAWI HAD THOUGHT THEN OF GOING ON TO WASHINGTON HIMSELF TO DISCUSS THE MATTER, BUT THIS HAD NOT WORKED OUT. STILL, HE SAID, HM LOOKS TO HIM TO GET SOMETHING STARTED WITH USG ON FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS RELATIVE TO OUR EXPRESSED DESIRE TO MAKE SOME USE OF MASIRAH, THOUGH DUE TO HM'S STRONG PERSONAL INTEREST ANY SIGNIFICANT DISCUSSIONS WHOULD PROBABLY BE CONDUCTED WITH SULTAN PERSONALLY.

3. I SAID ALL THIS WOULD BE REPORTED TO WASHINGTON, BUT FOR THE MOMENT COULD ONLY REITERATE WHAT I HAD TOLD HM JULY 25 -- THAT WE APPRECIATE OMAN'S COOPERATION AND ITS INLREST IN HEARING FROM US ABOUT HOW OUR USE OF MASIRAH WOULD BE DEVELOPED, AND ARE CONSIDERING THE QUESTION.

4. COMMENT: I DO NOT TAKE ZAWAWI'S REMARKS AS MEANING WE CANNOT PROCEED FOR REASONABLE TIME YET WITH PRESENT INTERIM SERIES OF FLIGHTS, EVEN WITHOUT STARTING TO TALK OF THE FUTURE. BUT CLEARLY HE IS WARNING US IN VERY DIPLO-MATIC MANNER THAT OMAN MUST MAKE ITS PLANS IN NEXT FEW MONTHS FOR TAKING OVER FROM RAF NEXT MARCH AND THAT IT WISHES OUR IDEAS ON FUTURE P-3 ARRANGEMENTS THIS FALL AND NOT SOMETIME IN THE WINTER. THIS OMANI WISH IS, OF COURSE, EMINENTLY LOGICAL, AS HM, ZAWAWI AND THE SULTAN'S DEFENSE MINISTRY AND AIR FORCE WANT TO KNOW WHILE DOING THIS PLANNING HOW TO FIGURE IN OUR POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION AT MASIRAH. PRESEMBLY THE HOPE IS THAT WE WILL OFFER SOME FORM OF SWEETNER WHICH DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY WILL HELP IN THE FINANCIAL OR TECHNICAL BURDENS OF RUNNING THE ISLAND'S AIRFIELD AFTER MARH '77, THOUGH ZAWAWI HAS GIVEN NO HINT JUST WHAT BENEFITS TO OMANGOV MIGHT BE SOUGHT OR REQUIRED.

5. MY OWN JUDGMENT IS THAT WE SHOULD INITIATE BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT FAIRLY SOON AFTER RAMADAN ENDS IN LATE SEPTEMBER. IN ANY EVENT, ZAWAWI PROBABLY WILL SEEK MEETING ON MASIRAH AT NEA ASST. SECRETARY LEVEL IN WASHINGTON, OR NEW YORK, WHEN HE ATTENDS UNGA MID-OCTOBER.

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IN MEANTIME, I WOULD APPRECIATE BEING KEPT INFORMED OF HOW DELIBERATIONS WITHIN USG ON THIS ISSUE ARE PROCEEDING.

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